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EAST EUROPE BRANCH NOTES

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Liberal Writers Offered Travel Passports

Prague has offered travel passports to three liberal Czechoslovak writers who have the opportunity to teach in the West.

Jiri Hochman, a former editor with Rude Pravo, has already received his passport and will apply without delay for an exit visa. Hochman has told the US Embassy in Prague that fellow writers Milan Kundera and Pavel Kohout have also been offered passports and the possibility of permission to go abroad to teach.

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Hochman attributes the offers in part to the precedent Moscow set in the Solzhenitsyn case. He said he had previously refused an offer of an emigration passport, but a travel passport implies the legal right of return to Czechoslovakia at any time. Another factor impelling Hochman to leave is that the police, who interrogated him and offered the passport, implied that he risked being charged with complicity in the "theft and removal to Austria" of the ashes of Josef Smrkovsky, President of the Czechoslovak parliament during the Dubcek era, who died in January.

The general feeling among blacklisted intellectuals, according to Hochman, is that Czechoslovakia is headed further into a severe cultural and political "dark age" in which a few selected individuals will be charged with past crimes to underline the regime's hardline domestic policies. [REDACTED]

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